

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PORT O 00326 301610Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 OES-07 NASA-01 SSO-00 EB-08
L-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 INRE-00 IGA-02 SS-15
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 0326

PASS NASA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, NASA, TD
SUBJECT: ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY SATELLITE DEMONSTRATION,
UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

REF: (A) STATE 007587
(B) 77 PORT OF SPAIN 2691

1.SUMMARY. GOTT CABINET HAS DECIDED AGAINST GRANT OF REQUESTED PERMISSION TO USE AIR FREQUENCIES FOR UWI SATELLITE DEMONSTRATION, STRONGLY CRITICIZING UWI PROCEDURES, ASSERTING GOTT'S RIGHT TO BE CONSULTED ON TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROJECTS WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND ALLEGING POSSIBLE HEALTH AND SECURITY HAZARDS FROM SATELLITE PROJECT. WHILE WE SEE DECISION LARGELY AS MOVE IN WILLIAMS' EFFORTS TO ASSERT GREATER CONTROL OVER UWI, IT EMPHASIZES NEED FOR AID TO ENSURE APPROVAL IN ADVANCE OF GOTT ON ALL PROJECTS HERE.

2.IN STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT JANUARY 27, MINISTER OF EDUCATION CUTHBERT JOSEPH REPORTED CABINET HAD CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PORT O 00326 301610Z

DECIDED AGAINST THE GRANT OF REQUESTED PERMISSION TO USE AIR FREQUENCIES FOR UWI SATELLITE DEMONSTRATION. HE SAID CABINET DISAGREED IN THE FIRST PLACE WITH PROCEDURES ADOPTED IN THIS "IMPORTANT AND FAR-REACHING MATTER." HE SAID GOTT CLAIMS THE RIGHT TO BE CONSULTED INITIALLY ON ANY UNIVERSITY PROJECTS OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, PARTICULARLY

WHEN THEY INVOLVE USE OF TERRITORY AND "AIR SPACE" OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO. HE ALSO REFERRED TO RECENTLY PUBLISHED WHITE PAPER ON HIGHER EDUCATION WHICH SEEKS TO WORK OUT GREATER AUTONOMY FOR ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS OF UWI, AND SAID PROJECT IGNORES THESE INITIATIVES. DR. JOSEPH FURTHER EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT HEALTH AND SECURITY OF POPULATION OF TRINIDAD, CITING RECENT CRASH OF SOVIET SATELLITE IN CANADA AS EXAMPLE OF POSSIBLE HAZARDS. JOSEPH CONCEDED THAT THE MINISTER OF WORKS, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS HAD RECEIVED A LETTER ON AUGUST 30, 1977, REPORTING OFFER FROM USAID FOR THE PROJECT AND REQUESTING PERMISSION TO USE THE FREQUENCIES. HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS REQUEST WAS REPEATED ON NOVEMBER 30, 1977.

4. OVER THE WEEKEND, AFFAIR WAS THE SUBJECT OF EDITORIALS IN BOTH MAJOR NEWSPAPERS, WHICH HELD DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED VIEWS ON THE ISSUE. GUARDIAN FULLY SUPPORTED MOVE, FOCUSSED ON UWI'S ALLEGED USURPATION OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY AND CHARACTERIZING UWI'S BEHAVIOR AS "BOORISH." EXPRESS ON THE OTHER HAND SUGGESTED IT WAS A MOVE IN GOTT'S BROADER PLANS FOR THE UNIVERSITY. IT CITED FACT THAT CABINET WAS ANSWERING A QUESTION PUT TO IT IN AUGUST AND AGAIN IN NOVEMBER, AND NOTED THAT ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE 24 HOURS BEFORE UWI'S GRADUATION EXERCISES (WHEN CHANCELLOR WAS HERE FROM CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT O 00326 301610Z

JAMAICA), CHARACTERIZING CABINET'S DECISION AS "PETTY."

5. COMMENT. EMBASSY BELIEVES EXPRESS HAS RIGHTLY ZEROED IN ON HEART OF THE MATTER, AND THAT WILLIAMS HAS SEIZED ON THIS REQUEST TO PLAY POLITICS WITH UWI. JOSEPH'S STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT WAS CERTAINLY APPROVED (IF NOT WRITTEN) BY WILLIAMS; IT IS FULL OF INTERNAL INCONSISTENCIES, SUCH AS ADMITTING THAT UWI HAD REPORTED PROJECT IN AUGUST AND THEN CRITICIZING UNIVERSITY FOR NOT CONSULTING IN ADVANCE, AND BRINGING UP WHITE PAPER ON HIGHER EDUCATION WHICH WAS PUBLISHED LONG AFTER PROJECT WAS INITIATED. UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS WERE RESIGNED TO FACT THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE THREE-WAY SATELLITE EXPERIMENT AS MUCH AS A WEEK BEFORE CABINET DECISION, BUT FORMER REFUSAL AND STRONG PUBLIC DENUNCIATION CAME AS A SURPRISE TO THEM.

6. WHILE JOSEPH SKETCHED ROLE OF USAID AND NASA IN THIS PROJECT, HIS CRITICISM WAS AIMED AT UWI, NOT USG. NEVERTHELESS, ONE ASPECT OF THIS ISSUE COULD CAUSE US CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT HERE. AS NOTED IN REF (B),

NORMAL UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES FOR IMPORTING EQUIPMENT FOR USE AT CAMPUS IS TO REQUEST GOTT APPROVAL FOR DUTY-FREE ENTRY; DESPITE ROUTINE NATURE OF SUCH REQUESTS, THEY ARE NORMALLY PASSED ON BY CABINET. IN THIS CASE, SATELLITE EQUIPMENT WAS SHIPPED DOWN AS DIPLOMATIC MAIL AND CLEARED OUT OF CUSTOMS BY THIS EMBASSY. WHILE REASON WE WERE GIVEN FOR THIS PROCEDURE WAS AIRLINE EMBARGO ON AIR FREIGHT, WILLIAMS COULD MAKE AN ISSUE OF THIS UNORTHODOX PROCEDURE IF IT SHOULD COME TO HIS ATTENTION AND HE CHOOSES TO USE IT.

7. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO KNOW WHAT THE EFFECT OF THIS INCIDENT WILL BE ON OTHER AID PROJECTS AT THE ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS OF WUI, WE WISH TO EMPHASIZE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PORT O 00326 301610Z

(AS WE HAVE SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST) THAT ANY AID PROJECTS HERE MUST BE PROPERLY CLEARED THROUGH GOTT CHANNELS, REGARDLESS OF REGIONAL INSTITUTION THROUGH WHICH FUNDING IS MADE, IF THEY ARE TO BE SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED. THIS HAS BEEN TRUE IN THE PAST, AND IN THE CASE OF UWI WILL BE MORE SO IN THE FUTURE, AS WILLIAMS HAS CLEARLY SIGNALLED HIS INTENTION TO ASSERT HIS CONTROL OVER THE ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS. WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE CASUALTIES OF THIS PARTICULAR WAR.

8. THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY THAT THE PRESS MAY SEEK TO FOLLOW UP ON JOSEPH'S REFERENCES TO HEALTH AND SECURITY HAZARDS AND TO RECENT CRASH OF SOVIET SATELLITE IN CANADA (HIGHLIGHTED BY SUBSEQUENT PRESS REPORTS OF POSSIBLE INJURIES FROM RADIATION TO CANADIAN RESIDENTS), AND WE ASSUME THAT WE CAN GIVE CATEGORICAL ASSURANCES THAT EQUIPMENT SHIPPED TO TRINIDAD CONTAINS NOTHING OF ANY DANGER TO ANYONE. IF THIS ASSUMPTION IS INCORRECT, WE WOULD APPRECIATE PARTICULARS FROM NASA SOONEST.
FOX

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